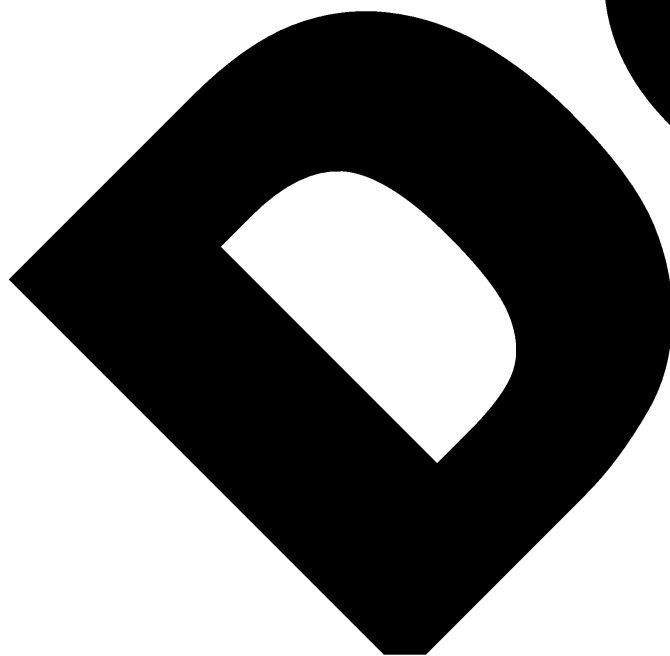


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Developments in Indochina

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127
29 March 1973

State Dept. review completed

Page Denied

25X1

29 March 1973

DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

(Information as of 1500)

Page

SOUTH VIETNAM

1

25X1

25X1

With an eye to his coming trip to the US, Thieu has taken to the hustings in an effort to improve the government's image as well as to increase his own popular standing.

CAMBODIA

4

A Khmer insurgent who recently rallied provides some insights on the training of Cambodians in North Vietnam. Svay Rieng weathered an enemy attack with the aid of US air strikes.

Page Denied

Thieu, the Politician

President Thieu is taking new steps to improve his government's image and to increase his own standing with the people. This week he traveled to Can Tho for ceremonies commemorating the third anniversary of the Land Reform Law. The President made an address citing the success of land reform and announcing a new five-year economic development program that is to stress agricultural development. He also promised sweeping administrative reforms to promote greater local autonomy and to rid the local bureaucracy of corruption. According to the US Embassy, Thieu appeared to relish the role of a political campaigner and received a warm welcome from his Can Tho audience.

Thieu also acted this week to relieve three province chiefs of their duties, according to the official Vietnam press. The three had been charged with corruption by the Inspectorate, and Thieu has asked Vice President Huong to conduct investigations so that they can be prosecuted.

The timing of Thieu's actions has been motivated in part by his coming trip to the US, during which he hopes to get commitments for additional economic aid. Thieu also is trying to increase popular support for his government in the political struggle with the Viet Cong. His call for administrative reform and for economic development in the rural areas was first outlined at a meeting with province chiefs early this month. Thieu has emphasized the importance of rural areas because this is where the Viet Cong are in closest contact with the people.

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29 March 1973

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CAMBODIAA Rallier Reports

The interrogation of a young Khmer insurgent

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provided some insight into the training of Cambodians in North Vietnam. Along with approximately 200 Khmer from Cambodia and South Vietnam, the rallier left for North Vietnam. The group arrived at the "Vietnamese-Khmer Friendship School" in the Hanoi area

According to the rallier, the school was a reception and administration center staffed and run by Cambodians. Most of the trainees at the school were Khmer, along with some Laotians and some montagnards from South Vietnam.

The rallier received several years of training in the vicinity of the school, after six months of Vietnamese language training for him and his class of 400. There was then a year of political and ideological indoctrination, followed by military training. The class spent two years studying all types of weapons and sabotage.

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His infiltration group consisted of 800 returnees, but only about 500 arrived in Kratie Province in March 1971 because many fell sick or died en route.

The rallier said that he finally decided to quit the insurgents' ranks because he disliked the spartan life he had to lead in North Vietnam and the lack of freedom that existed in "liberated" areas of Cambodia.

29 March 1973

Page Denied

The Military Situation

The southeastern city of Svay Rieng was heavily attacked for the first time in several months on 27 and 28 March, but the attacks were repulsed with the aid of US air strikes. A Khmer insurgent rallier indicated that elements of a North Vietnamese regiment may have participated in the attacks.

There has been no change in the situation along Route 1 north of Neak Luong, and the insurgents still hold a short segment of Route 4 northeast of Kompong Som. Government troops attempting to clear Route 4 had 19 killed and 87 wounded on 27 March. To the east, the insurgents are continuing to put pressure on government positions a few miles south and west of the town of Takeo.

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29 March 1973